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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR SOLOMONT'S JANUARY 12, 2010, MEETING
WITH SPANISH SYG OF THE PRESIDENCY LEON

REF: MADRID 20

Classified By: Ambassador Alan D. Solomont, Reasons 1.4(b),(d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The Ambassador met with Spanish SYG of the Presidency (NSA-equivalent) Bernardino Leon January 12. He wanted to meet with Leon as soon as possible to begin to establish a good working relationship and to share his observations regarding the U.S.-Spain bilateral relationship. He emphasized his primary goal as Ambassador is to strengthen the partnership between the GOS and USG. The USG wants and expects Spain to be the most reliable partner on issues of mutual interest, and the Ambassador noted its uneven behavior on critical issues such as the Balkans, its promise to take five Guantanamo detainees, and on promoting human rights in Cuba. Spain,s support and leadership in the EU on Iran and Afghanistan are opportunities for Madrid to reaffirm Spain,s commitment to the strategic partnership. The Ambassador pledged to work closely with GOS officials on obtaining Spanish public support for our mutual national security interests and counter-terrorism priorities. Leon welcomed the Ambassador's candor and commitment to forging a close working relationship, acknowledging that Spain,s credibility was at stake and it needed to follow through on its commitments. He underscored Spain,s continued aspirations to join the G-20 and welcomed the USG,s openness to this possibility. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The meeting followed a January 7 meeting in Washington between NSA Jones, Leon, and Solomont. The Ambassador delivered a message of tough love. He underscored that NSA Jones and many others in the USG thought very highly of Leon, and said his Embassy and he personally were committed to a close working relationship with Leon.

¶3. (C) Leon briefed on plans for President Zapatero,s upcoming visit to Washington in early February for the National Prayer Breakfast. While Zapatero hopes to have a brief encounter with the President on the margins of the breakfast, he appreciates the President,s time constraints and acknowledges the recent summit meeting. Zapatero,s developing agenda in Washington includes a program at the Atlantic Council, a possible address to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and other meetings in which he wants to send an important message about Spain,s EU Presidency priorities and its commitment to the Transatlantic partnership. Leon said the Royal Palace accepts with pleasure the White House,s proposed February 17 date for a "substantive" visit by the King, who looks forward to establishing a close relationship with President Obama.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador emphasized that his primary goal is to strengthen the partnership between Spain and the USG. President Obama needs the GOS to be a reliable partner on the key issues of mutual interest, he said. The USG appreciates that Spain wants to help President Obama, but the USG expects the GOS will see that cooperation with the U.S. is in Spain's

interest and the interest of its NATO allies. Speaking frankly, the Ambassador indicated that Spain is viewed unevenly in the USG. While many, including NSA Jones, appreciate Spain's contributions and support over the last year, there is concern in some quarters about Spain's reliability, particularly on Kosovo, Cuba and elsewhere. Spain would do well to make clear commitments and then follow through.

15. (C) The Ambassador emphasized that the USG welcomes Leon, FM Moratinos, and other Spanish officials, reassurances to work in tandem on key issues, and we too want to work closely with Spain to avoid misunderstandings. There are several principal opportunities for close coordination and cooperation -- on Guantanamo detainees, Afghanistan and Iran -- where Spain's leadership, especially in the EU Presidency, is particularly welcome. He noted the importance of U/S Burns' visit to Spain January 14-15 for consultations with the Spanish and EU political directors on Iran. On Guantanamo, the Ambassador asked Leon for clarification of FM Moratinos, recent public statements suggesting Spain could not resettle detainees from Yemen, although it had committed to taking one. Leon was not aware of any GOS change of heart in this regard and undertook to clarify. He said that Spanish law enforcement is carefully vetting proposed detainees for resettlement, noting however that Spain's very independent judiciary, and in particular its crusading investigative judges, are always poised to create problems for the government, especially on detainees. The GOS is working to get the Spanish Congress on board, and President Zapatero will appear before Congress in February to make the government's case.

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16. (C) Leon welcomed the Ambassador's invitation to coordinate closely our messages on Afghanistan, agreeing that the public needed to understand the direct link between the March 11, 2004, Atocha train bombings in Spain and Afghanistan. On Iran, Leon said Spain stands ready to support the USG and added that UNSC support will be instrumental to achieving our objectives. Leon said he had long been concerned about the proliferation effects from an unchecked Iran, noting that Iran's actions threaten not only the Middle East but also the Maghreb on Spain's border. On the Middle East, Leon underscored Spain's continued interest in helping promote peace, suggesting that a meeting of the Quartet on the margins of the prospective US-EU Summit in Spain could give some impetus to the peace process. The Ambassador said Spain can help now by encouraging the Palestinians to return to the bargaining table, noting that Special Envoy Mitchell is likely to ask FM Moratinos to encourage the Palestinians in this regard during their January 12 meeting in Brussels. On Kosovo, Leon said Spain understands USG concerns and pledged to work in harmony.

17. (C) Leon reported that at NSA Jones, request the GOS is outlining objectives and deliverables for a possible US-EU Summit. In closing, he mentioned that he was departing later that evening for a G-20 sherpas meeting in Mexico, reiterating Spain's overriding national priority for G-20 membership. He said he was encouraged by Deputy National Security Advisor for International Economic Affairs Froman's openness in their recent meeting in Washington to a formula that could include Spain along with the UK, Germany, France, Italy, and the EU. Leon said he is optimistic and described Spain's ongoing efforts to line up international support for its candidacy. While publicly none of the Europeans would pick between the Netherlands and Spain, he said that privately they agree that the Netherlands did not have a shot. While Leon did not think a definitive decision on G-20 membership would be taken in Mexico, he is traveling there to make Spain's strong case. He asked the Ambassador to call Froman to reiterate Spain's desire for USG support.

SOLOMONT